

PROJECT NAME: Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge

RECIPIENT: Western Rivers Conservancy

LOCATION: Northeastern, Utah

PURPOSE: Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) is working to acquire and protect in-holdings of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, a crucial component of the Great Salt Lake Ecosystem. The Bear River meets the Great Salt Lake in an expansive delta that serves as a freshwater oasis in the middle of the desert for millions of migratory waterfowl.

The Bear River Basin, located in northeastern Utah, southeastern Idaho and southwestern Wyoming, comprises 7,500 square miles of mountain and valley lands. Three hundred-fifty miles in length, the Bear River crosses state boundaries five times and is the largest stream in the western hemisphere that does not empty into the ocean; instead it is the largest tributary to the Great Salt Lake. This landscape is unique in that it is entirely enclosed by mountains, thus forming a huge basin with no external drainage outlets.

Western Rivers Conservancy is working to permanently protect critical parts of this nationally significant wetland complex. WRC has several opportunities to add land to the 74,000-acre Refuge.

Western Rivers Conservancy has entered into an agreement to purchase the Feather and Finn property, a 696-acre in-holding in this marshland ecosystem. To date, WRC has acquired the first portion of this ownership and will utilize an FY10 appropriation to place more than half of the property into the permanent conservation stewardship of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. An FY11 appropriation will complete protection of the entire Feather and Finn property, as well as other critical in-holdings: the 600-acre Lucky Seven and Pintail Club, and half of the 1,900-acre Canada Goose Club. These private lands, which are located within the legislatively approved boundary of the Refuge, include a variety of wetland, upland and open water habitats that will expand and enhance the Refuge's offerings.

We are optimistic that our project will become part of a larger, watershed-wide land conservation effort that is in preliminary scoping phase by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Western Rivers Conservancy plans to be an integral part of the land acquisition and land conservation efforts within the framework of this larger partnership.

The Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge and the Great Salt Lake are iconic western ecosystems. The Refuge has incredible local support. Western Rivers Conservancy's acquisitions are high priority opportunities that will yield immediate results for the enduring benefit of birds, wildlife and people.

AMOUNT: \$4.9 million